



## City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

### Department of Planning and Development

Diane M. Sugimura, Director

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck, Chair, UD&P Committee  
Councilmember Richard Conlin  
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen

**FROM:** Diane M. Sugimura

**DATE:** September 1, 2004

**SUBJECT:** Committee Briefing: DPD Monthly Update, September 8, 2004

This month, I've included a variety of miscellaneous topics. There is a lot happening in all areas of the department's work.

### **Comprehensive Plan Ten Year Update**

As you know, City Council is holding a public hearing on the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments on Tuesday, September 7 at 5:30 in the Council Chamber. A discussion will follow at the September 8 Committee meeting.

### **Upcoming Housing Legislation**

We hope to brief the Committee on September 22 on housing-related legislation for the South Lake Union and First Hill neighborhoods. These ordinances are intended to encourage housing development consistent with Council requests to follow-up on recent jobs related efforts. Similarly, legislation to promote more housing to support retail activity on Broadway and in the University District will follow shortly.

### **Creating Opportunity in Seattle's Neighborhood Business Districts**

Following a general public meeting, plus six community meetings and discussions with a variety of organizations, we are now ready to discuss specific proposals. Two public forums have been scheduled for Wednesday, September 29 (7:00 to 9:00 pm) and Thursday, September 30 (7:00 am to 9:00 am). Major proposals include: flexibility in street front uses; standards and guidelines for street front design; flexibility in the provision of residential amenities; parking standards that are consistent with demand; and short-term parking for businesses.

### **Land Use Permit Activity**

In August we saw quite an increase in the number of land use applications compared with August 2003, from 47 to 70 applications. Overall for the year, we are about 20% higher than 2003. We are seeing some big projects in and around downtown and mixed-use projects in our neighborhoods.

### **Lessons Learned in the Field**

Sometimes good news comes out of bad news. We recently learned of an unanticipated outcome from the recent arson fires ... an understanding of and real appreciation for some of the Building Code requirements, and why our inspectors insist that buildings be constructed properly. In a recent townhouse example, the units adjacent to the fire were a total loss, but the other units were well-protected by the fire wall. The builder of one of the damaged buildings, who has had a history of questioning inspectors' corrections, told one of our supervisors that he will never argue over Code required corrections again. The builder was amazed at how well the 2-hour separation wall worked.

### **Update on Tent City 3**

Tent City 3 will be returning to El Centro de la Raza from September 6 to November 29. About 15 people attended a recent public meeting including residents, neighborhood organization representatives and business owners/managers. This meeting was a far cry from the one several years ago when close to two hundred people attended. The tone of the meeting was cordial and productive. Several neighbors welcomed the return of Tent City while airing specific concerns and requests of both Tent City and El Centro. Issues raised included a request for Tent City to take responsibility for people who live in their vehicles, apparently following Tent City but not conforming to Tent City's code of conduct. Concern was voiced that Beacon Hill has done more than their fair share of hosting Tent City in the past 4 or 5 years (this is the third time). Requests were made for Tent City to communicate with the neighborhood regularly, and for El Centro to take better care of their site in general. There was also discussion about linking Tent City residents with opportunities to work.

### **Learning from NYC**

At their suggestion, David George, Noise Inspector, visited NYC, meeting with their Department of Transportation and Department of Environmental Protection. DEP has their own court. David observed a number of noise cases including construction noise/activity beyond permitted hours, a poorly maintained refrigeration unit at a neighborhood market, and noise emanating into the street from bars. These issues are all familiar to us, but on a much smaller scale. NYC also has 20 noise inspectors who work in teams of two, between 6:00 pm to 2:30 am. These days we hear more concerns about quality of life issues, including noise, particularly in our mixed-use areas.

### **I.D. Vacant Building Status**

For many years, the upper stories of a number of buildings in the International District have been vacant. This has been of great concern to businesses and agencies in the District, as well as to the City. It is unfortunate that many of these buildings have not been returned to use. There has, however, been some good news this year. The Wing Luke Asian Museum has purchased the Freeman Hotel/Gong Dip. They are starting their capital campaign. In addition, Mr. Koh has purchased three buildings. The SEPA determination for the Milwaukee Hotel was recently published, to change the existing hotel and restaurant use to a restaurant and 113 apartment units. The Hong Kong/Mar Hotel together with the Alps Hotel is in for land use and construction permits.

### **2004 Annual Vacant Building Survey**

The 2004 Survey was completed in July. Each year we survey residential buildings known to have been vacant at some point within the past five years. The survey includes a visual inspection of the exterior of each building from the public right-of-way,

or, when access around the building was available, the condition of the entire structure was assessed.

Each building was assessed for its overall structural condition. In addition, items such as roofing, windows, siding and general safety issues were evaluated. After assessment, each building was assigned a rating from 1 to 4 based on the level of substandard conditions as defined in the Housing and Building Maintenance Code (HBMC). Immediate problems such as being open to unauthorized entry or the presence of inoperable vehicles were noted for future enforcement action. A total of 443 buildings were surveyed. The following table summarizes the results and compares them with results from the prior 3 years.

Building Rating	Number of buildings			
	2004	2003	2002	2001
1 No HBMC violations observed	56	65	68	65
2 Minor violations observed	118	152	159	145
3 Moderate violations observed	110	96	95	58
4 Serious violations observed	32	29	24	33
Demolished	51	44	42	38
Occupied	76	60	66	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>405</b>

There are 55 vacant buildings currently on DPD's quarterly monitoring list. A building is put on the monitoring list when we find a violation of the vacant building standards. (A number of residential buildings known to be vacant have no code violations, and therefore are never added to the quarterly monitoring list.) Each building monitored is inspected every three months to ascertain whether it remains closed to unauthorized entry and to determine whether the building condition has deteriorated to the point that an action concerning a building unfit for human habitation should be taken. The number of buildings on vacant building monitoring has been decreasing in recent years; this year there are 15 fewer than last year.

#### **Upcoming Presentations: Urban Development in Center Cities**

William Hudnut III, currently a Senior Resident Fellow for Public Policy at the Urban Land Institute, will be speaking at a ULI breakfast on Tuesday, September 14 at the Grand Hyatt, 7:30 am. Mr. Hudnut is the former four-term Mayor of Indianapolis, Congressman, TV commentator, author, public speaker and much more. On Monday, September 20, Bruce Katz, vice president of The Brookings Institution and founding Director of the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, will be speaking in the Bertha Landes Room at 6:00 pm. The presentation will be "At the Corner of Future and Main, How a Vibrant Center City Stimulates the Region's Economy." Mr. Katz is also a writer and commentator on urban and metropolitan issues. He is the former Chief of Staff to Henry Cisneros, former Secretary of HUD, and has served as staff to the Senate Subcommittee on Housing and Urban Affairs.